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Presidential Debates

The 1976 general election is off to a promising start now that both candidates have committed themselves to a series of debates. If they can enlighten the electorate in the process of trying to score points against one another, President Ford and Governor Carter could make a permanent contribution to American politics.

While voters in 1960 were enthralled by the debates of the Kennedy-Nixon campaign, they were not repeated in 1964, 1968 or 1972 for two major reasons. One was the unwillingness of entrenched incumbents to give underdog challengers an appearance of parity in head-to-head encounters. Another reason lay in the superficiality of the Kennedy-Nixon debates. They were primarily cosmetic, to Mr. Nixon's detriment—a lesson not soon forgotten. And the Quemoy-Matsu issue, which provoked the sharpest exchange, turned out to be an election-time wonder that faded quickly. If debates in the Ford-Carter campaign are a lot better, future candidates will not dare to duck them.

President Ford's motives in being the first to propose campaign debates are clear enough. Although he is an incumbent, he is far from being entrenched. The President's acceptance speech in Kansas City, probably the most effective of his career, reflected a Truman-like eagerness to attack, attack, attack. Mr. Ford savaged Congress, saying it "won't act" as repeatedly as Mr. Truman used to say it was "do-nothing." He taunted Mr. Carter, saying the GOP will not rely on "mysterious plans to be revealed in some dim and distant future." But what really fired up the delegates was the proposal for debates that might expose Mr. Carter's putative weaknesses and contradictions.

Although Mr. Ford has a reputation as a lackluster speaker, he usually performs well in the kind of partisan debate he learned during his quarter-century in Congress. Furthermore, he has the advantage of having at his fingertips details on various government programs and policies that Mr. Carter is learning through crash-course methods down in Plains, Ga.

The 1976 campaign provides a likely setting for good debate because of contrasting philosophical differences between the two parties. The Democratic approach, despite Mr. Carter's anti-Washington tactic during the primaries, is based on a belief in the beneficence of government. It is through government, albeit a reorganized and more efficient government, that the Democratic party proposes to meet the nation's problems. The Republican approach, as decreed by the conservative convention in Kansas City, is one of suspicion and distrust of government. The nation's needs in the GOP perception are to be met primarily through the private sector.

Although positions fashioned for election purposes lead to a certain amount of posturing, the differences today between the parties are real and profound—perhaps more so than at any time in recent history. If the Ford-Carter debates are to live up to their potential, these ideological differences will have to be discussed in depth. An exchange of slogans, cliches and bombast on fleeting issues will not be enough.

A Look at Ford's Strategy For the Coming Campaign

Kansas City.

When Jimmy Carter was a little boy, a cactus plant was found cut down on the family place in Plains, Ga. Carter's father asked his son: "Jimmy, did you cut down that cactus?" Carter replied: "Father, I cannot tell a lie. Maybe I did and maybe I didn't."

That gag, which went the rounds at the Republican convention here in Kansas City, expresses the basic strategy President Ford plans to use against the Democrats in the campaign this fall. The President is going to try to expose what Republican polls show are Mr. Carter's weaknesses. From that objective there flow both the President's decision to debate Jimmy Carter and the choice of Senator Robert Dole of Kansas as his running mate.

The polling base was provided in a massive survey done last June for the Republican National Committee by Robert Teeter of Detroit. The Teeter survey found that, though the public cared about inflation and unemployment, there was no decisive issue, such as Vietnam had been in 1968 or Korea in 1952. In the absence of any overwhelming issue, the election was bound to turn on personal qualities: issues would come into play only to underline the attributes and character of the rival candidates.

So, after discounting the issues, the Teeter study went on to deal with Mr. Carter himself. It found, as many other surveys have, that Mr. Carter was not well known to the American public. It also affirmed the view that, while he was extraordinarily popular in the South, he had no strong following in the West, the mountain states or the plains states. Finally the survey supported the notion that Mr. Carter was weak with many Democratic voters, notably Catholics and Jews, in the Great Lakes states and parts of the Northeast.

In going after Mr. Carter the maximum Republican objective would be to paint him into a corner as a liberal Democrat—"Southern-fried McGovern," as Senator Dole, who will do much of the painting, put it. Failing that, the Republicans would like at least to show that Mr. Carter trims his sails with every prevailing wind, and is not a man who can be trusted.

Though Senator Dole and other Republicans will go after Mr. Carter, the main responsibility in the campaign will fall on President Ford. The Ford advisers believe that the President has not looked good on the stump in the past when he has campaigned in a highly partisan way. The plan is for Mr. Ford to campaign actively this fall--but in a less partisan and more presidential manner.

The problem of smoking out Mr. Carter on the issues is not minimized in the Ford camp. Indeed, the President has decided to debate his opponent precisely in order to show that Mr. Carter is either a liberal Democrat or a trimmer.

The Republican case against Mr. Carter is going to be asserted with special force in the states where Mr. Carter did poorly in the past and is little known. That means abandoning the Southern strategy of the Nixon campaigns. Mr. Ford instead seems to be developing a Western strategy.

His base will be the mountain states and the farm states of the Great Plains. The big battles will come in the Pacific states, especially California, the Southern periphery (Florida, Texas, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee), the Great Lakes states—especially Illinois which is usually close--and some Eastern states (notably New Jersey and Pennsylvania) where large pockets of Catholics and Jews are said to have doubts about Jimmy Carter.

Mr. Ford's choice of a running mate reflected a balance of these considerations. Senator Dole, a conservative from western Kansas, has special appeal in the farm states. He is a strong campaigner with a flair for sardonic phrases that may penetrate Jimmy Carter's thin skin.

The chances for victory are not considered brilliant. Everybody knows the Republicans have to come from behind. Senator Dole at a breakfast early in the week likened Mr. Ford's position to that of Barry Goldwater at the start of the 1964 campaign.

But some signs are considered hopeful. In particular, the Carter support, which built up so rapidly, seems to be falling fairly quickly. The Gallup Poll shows that the Carter lead slipped 18 points--from 62-29 to 56-33--in the three weeks after the Democratic convention.

What seems clear is that the outcome of the election is going to depend on the campaigning effectiveness of the two leaders. Mr. Carter is so intelligent and so nimble that the President will find it very difficult to pin him down. But if the President does well in the debates, he can at least make the election close.

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Ford, in Vail, plans Carter debate tactics

By MURIEL DOBBIN
Sun Staff Correspondent

Vail, Colo.—President Ford settled into the mountain resort of Vail yesterday for a week of working on his campaign strategy and pondering the risks of his forthcoming debate with Jimmy Carter, the Democratic nominee.

Around the President's vacation home were the peaks of the Gore range, and the sunny tranquility of a skiing village. Ahead of him was a rigorous two-month campaign in which he is already running behind his Democratic opponent.

Mr. Ford has pledged himself to debate Mr. Carter in the weeks ahead. The format and timing of that televised confrontation will be one of the priority problems to be discussed by the President and his political strategists who will be flying in to Vail in the next few days.

The Ford advisers are aware of the calculated risk built into a debate, which could be pivotal in terms of swinging public approval to one candidate as was the case when John F. Kennedy faced Richard M. Nixon on national television in 1960.

Mr. Ford's campaign style and speech delivery—especially the latter—have been a continuing source of concern at the White House where the President himself is said to be aware of his too-frequent failure to oratorically capture a crowd.

The President's acceptance speech before the Republican National Convention in Kansas City last week was evidence, however, that Mr. Ford was prepared to make a major effort to remedy his inadequacies on the podium.

According to White House officials, the President spent an hour or two a day over the past three weeks working on both the text and delivery of what observers viewed as one of the three good speeches he has made since he took office.

Another was his moving address as he took over the presidency from a disgraced predecessor, and the other at the Helsinki Conference preceding his visit to Eastern Europe.

Hackneyed political speeches and a wooden speaking style have plagued Mr. Ford's campaigning. If he needed proof of those twin handicaps, he presumably found it in the reception of his public addresses. Audiences frequently gave the impression that he was lulling them to sleep rather than bringing them to their feet.

At Kansas City last Thursday, however, the President's intensive rehearsing and rewriting of a crucially important speech paid off. The convention delegates, many of them disgruntled that Ronald Reagan had not won the nomination, came prepared to be unimpressed when Mr. Ford appeared on the platform, and remained to be surprised by a dramatic, well-timed performance on the part of Mr. Ford.

White House officials minced no words about the

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He received only 21 per cent of the vote in the California primary against Gov. Edmund G. Brown, Jr.

A speech to kick off the swing in Los Angeles will set the tone of the Carter campaign, which Mr. Powell described as one "one of optimism for the campaign and the country."

Before the American Legion's annual convention in Seattle, Mr. Carter will set forth his views on what steps must be taken "to restore this country to a proper position of trust and respect around the world" and to return the military to a "position of respect" after Vietnam, Mr. Powell said.

At the Iowa State Fairgrounds in Des Moines, Mr. Carter will attempt to use his background as a peanut farmer to tap discontent among Midwest farmers with the agricultural policies of the Ford administration, Mr. Powell added.

Meanwhile, Mr. Powell announced that the Carter campaign had set up a special unit to improve the candidate's standing among Catholics and ethnic groups, where polls indicate that he has failed to attract the kind of landslide support that has traditionally helped to elect Democrats.

Mr. Carter has appointed Terry Sunday, former administrative assistant with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Sister Victoria Mongiardo, formerly with the National Center for Urban Ethnic Affairs, to the new unit.

Much of Mr. Carter's problem with Catholic voters stems from his opposition to a constitutional amendment to prohibit abortion. Explaining the need for the new unit, Mr. Powell said that Catholics and ethnics living in urban areas have felt

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Ford mulls Carter clash

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amount of effort that had gone into the acceptance speech, shrewdly timed, with its crowd-pleasing challenge to Mr. Carter.

The inclusion of Mr. Reagan in the platform group during the closing moments of the convention sent Mr. Ford off on the road to November with the approving roars of the Republican delegates to remember.

Ford advisers admit that the President will not again have three weeks to prepare for one speech. But they are encouraged by the favorable comments made, and the indication that Mr. Ford's platform problems are not irremediable.

What will be intensive will be the President's preparation for the Carter debate, on which so much may depend.

'Cheap shot' blamed in Baker's omission

Nashville (AP)—A Nashville lawyer says Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr. (R., Tenn.) topped the list of President Ford's potential running mates until "one of the best-timed cheap shots in history" knocked him out of the running hours before the final selection was made.

Lamar Alexander, a former White House aide and onetime member of Mr. Baker's staff, told the Nashville *Banner* that Mr. Baker probably lost the Republican vice-presidential nomination because of a story about his wife published by Jack Anderson, the columnist, last Thursday.

The *Banner* quoted Mr. Alexander yesterday as saying that Mr. Baker's wife, Joy, was involved in a minor traffic accident in Washington on August 12 and that Mr. Anderson's column quoted the driver of the other car as saying Mrs. Baker had been drinking.

The column came a day after it was disclosed that Mrs. Baker, 47 years old, had been hospitalized in 1971 for treatment of a drinking problem.

Mr. Alexander, congressional liaison aide in the White House during the first administration of President Nixon, said Mr. Baker's staff denied that Mrs. Baker had been drinking before the accident.

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By MICHAEL NELSON

DEBATES

Many of today's voters are too young even to have been allowed to stay up and watch the last time two presidential candidates met face-to-face to debate the issues. That was 1960, when John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon locked horns four times on national television in the first, and until now the only, encounters of their kind.

Those who missed the Kennedy-Nixon debates, it appears, will get another chance. With President Ford's surprise challenge to debate delivered in his nomination acceptance speech in Kansas City Thursday night, and Jimmy Carter's hurried acceptance of the challenge, the way is clear for another round of debates.

But the agreement to debate also raises some profound questions about American presidential politics: Why are debates being restored to the campaign this year after a 16-year hiatus? What kind of debates will they be and who will sponsor them? What, given the experience of 1960, are they likely to add to the campaign? Will they simply be a one-shot deal, or will they become a regular feature of presidential politics, an island of halfway reasonable discussion in a sea of political ballyhoo?

Despite the enormous success of the debates in the 1960 campaign and President Kennedy's public promise to exchange views with any Republican opponent in 1964, such encounters failed to become a fixture in presidential campaigns.

Lyndon B. Johnson, his successor, felt out of his element on television and saw no reason to risk an all-but-insurmountable lead in a face-to-face encounter with Senator Barry Goldwater. For much the same reasons, Mr. Nixon refused to debate Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968 or George McGovern in 1972.

Since it would have been impolitic actually to cite political expediency as the reason for declining, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Nixon concocted other excuses. One was that it would be dangerous to place the President in a situation where he might inadvertently reveal a national secret in the heat of argument. Another was that their records were already there for the public to inspect, so why should they have to come out and defend them?

Congressional partisans of the tent-bound warriors provided still another out by seeming to it that Section 315 of the Federal Communications Act—the equal time provision—was not suspended again as it had been in 1960. Section 315 required not only equal time for the major-party contenders, but also all the dozen or so fringe candidates.

President Ford found that these demurrals were no longer acceptable. In March the Federal Communications Commission ruled that Section 315 allowed the networks to cover, though not sponsor, debates between the Republican and Democratic nominees. In addition, a tide of sentiment against the "imperial presidency" meant there was no longer any sympathy for a President-above-the-fray. And most important, perhaps, Gerald Ford, the first incumbent President to risk debates, is also the first to trail a challenger by more than 20 points in the polls.

As to the form the upcoming debates might take, the League of Women Voters, before the challenge was issued, had already launched a massive drive to enlist 5 million citizens and over 100 organizations to petition the major-party nominees to get in front of the cameras and exchange views. The League even proposed a format for the debates, and offered to sponsor them if necessary.

The League proposal calls for three separate hour-long exchanges on the topics of foreign policy, domestic policy, and basic philopsophy of government. A debate between the vice presidential nominees is also suggested. The debates would be conducted in about the same manner as in 1960—opening statements followed by discussion on issues put to the candidates by a panel of journalists and citizens, and televised on all three networks.

Some who watched the debates in 1960 were unimpressed by their quality, feeling that too much time was spent on trivial issues, such as Quemoy and Matsu, the offshore islands between China and Taiwan, and too little on important matters like civil rights. Their disappointment was exceeded perhaps only by their inflated expectations.

Admittedly, Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Nixon did not erase the Lincoln-Douglas debates from the history books, or rival them for memorable phrase-making and lucid philosophical discourse. But surely this is an unfair test. It is more valid to compare debates with the other activities that make up a presidential campaign. Here the 1960 exchanges set a standard that other elections have yet to match.

Various empirical studies conducted at the time highlight the educational functions that the "Great Debates" served in

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It's Carter vs. Ford on TV

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that election. Both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kennedy were more specific in presenting their own proposals and less likley to distort their opponent's than in other campaign appearances. Areas of agreement as well as disagreement were brought out, which gave voters a clearer picture of how the candidates actually compared: much more so than their highly partisan ads and speeches. An unexpected bonus was that the issue-content of the contenders' subsequent campaign talks increased as well.

Many undecided voters based their choice on the debates, and nearly 60 per cent told a Roper survey that their decisions were influenced to some extent. Firm partisians were, if not persuaded by, at least exposed to the other side. This fact alone may have given a needed dose of legitimacy to the extremely close and disputed outcome of the election.

All told, 115 million Americans watched one or more of the debates—no more than 75,000 saw Lincoln and Douglas—and the average family devoted 2½ hours to them. Televised election debates had done the improbable—they elevated the tone and content of a presidential campaign. And voters responded by turning out on election day at a rate unmatched since.

But, is the prospect of debates between presidential candidates merely an aberration of 1976, or is there a chance that they can become institutionalized? The need for such discussion is even greater now than it was in 1960. When Angus Campbell and his colleagues studied "The American Voter" of 1960, they discovered a politically complacent party man who generally voted the straight ticket year after year. Debates on the issues were icing on the cake to him.

"The Changing American Voter" of today, as described by Norman Nie, Sidney Verba, and John Petrocik, is a horse of a different color. He is "more politically aroused, more detached from political parties, and deeply dissatisfied with the political process." Having forsaken his choice on the issues and on the character of the contenders.

Clearly the electorate is way ahead of its so-called leaders in this regard. For if anything distinguishes the modern political campaign, it is the paucity of serious substantive discussion. Campaigns have become processions of staged "media-events"—empty contests in image-making between professional public relations men. Typically, this year's primaries have generated only one specific issue—the Panama Canal—even though dozens of surveys have shown that voters are deeply concerned about everything from crime to taxes.

Other than debates, there is nothing to bridge the ever-increasing gap between what voters want and what the politicians deliver in a campaign. Weakened political parties no longer provide dependable barometers of what citizens can expect from their nominees. And the press seems more concerned about second-guessing strategies than with discovering and discussing candidates' issue positions.

The commitment of President Ford and Mr. Carter to meet face-to-face is a hopeful sign. Ironically, debate is more fundamental to the American political system than to almost any other. The congressional process, however much congressmen abuse it, provides for an exchange of views before every major decision. Our legal system is rooted in the theory that heated argument sheds needed light through the adversary process. The presidency is the only branch of government that has managed to remain outside the essential give-and-take of ideas.

Yet in a time when the critical importance of both a president's power and personal character have been revealed by political scientists and events, we have, up to now, been denied a regular opportunity to appraise how clearly candidates for the office think under stress, and in what direction they would lead us if they got the chance. Small wonder that the real winner of most elections has been "none of the above," as witnessed by ever-declining turnouts. Perhaps, with the 1976 election as a begin-

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3d politician seized in Lockheed case

By HIDEKO TAKAYAMA
Sun Staff Correspondent

Tokyo—Tomisaburo Hashimoto, a former transport minister, was arrested yesterday afternoon for allegedly accepting $17,000 in bribes in connection with the Lockheed pay-off scandal.

Mr. Hashimoto was the third politician to be arrested here in the Lockheed bribery case. The others are Kakuei Tanaka, former prime minister, and Takayuki Sato, former parliamentary vice transport minister, who was arrested Friday for allegedly accepting bribes.

According to the Tokyo public prosecutor's office, Mr. Hashimoto helped to postpone the introduction of airbuses to Japan in government instructions issued in 1971 as requested by the president of All Nippon Airways, Japan's purchaser of the Lockheed airbuses.

At that time, Lockheed is said to have been far behind McDonnell Douglas in the development of airbuses and Japan Airlines, national flag carrier and also All Nippon's competitor on domestic routes, is said to have been ready to fly non-Lockheed airbuses.

The prosecution said that Mr. Hashimoto received the money at the beginning of November, 1972, from an executive of Marubeni, the former Lockheed sales agent in Japan, in return for "special favors."

It is believed that the $17,000 that Mr. Hashimoto is said to have received was a part of the mysterious "30 units" receipt signed by a former Marubeni managing director.

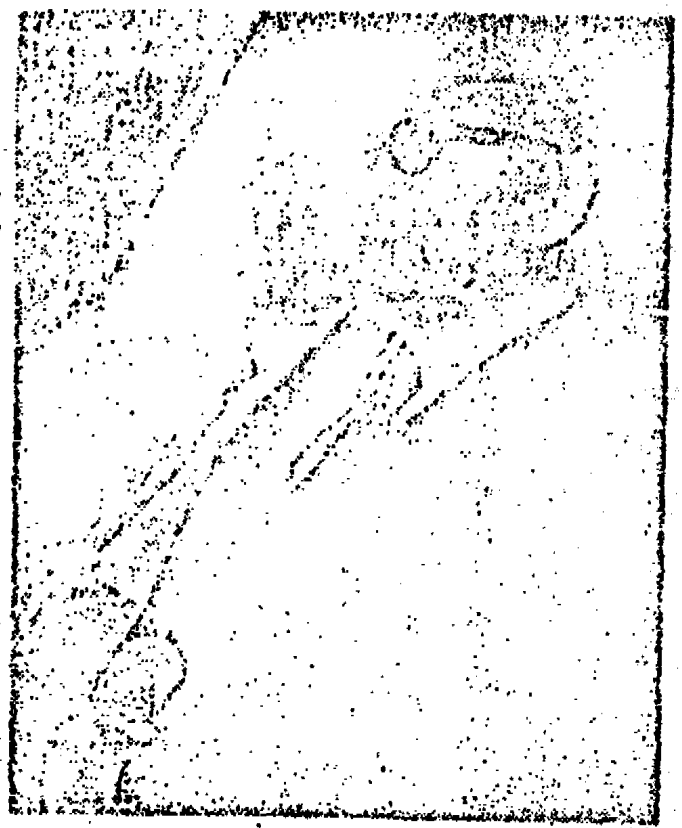
Mr. Hashimoto, 75, a veteran politician who served as transport minister in 1970 and 1971 and was the director general of the ruling Liberal Democratic party from 1972 to 1974, was taken to the Tokyo Detention House after his arrest.

A secretary at Mr. Hashimoto's office said, "I am sorry, but I can't give you any comments now. We are too busy."

Mr. Hashimoto, known as the "Buddha" among his colleagues for his calm disposition, is a member of Tanaka faction within the ruling party and has been a member of the lower house of parliament since 1949.

There have been 18 arrests in the pay-off case so far, including those of Mr. Hashimoto and Mr. Tanaka. Seven of the accused are out on bail and two were released without indictment.

With a general election required by law before the end of this year, it is believed that the arrests of three politicians from the ruling party may have a great effect on the outcome of the voting.



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Tomisaburo Hashimoto (right) is taken to prosecutor's office in Tokyo. He was later arrested and jailed.

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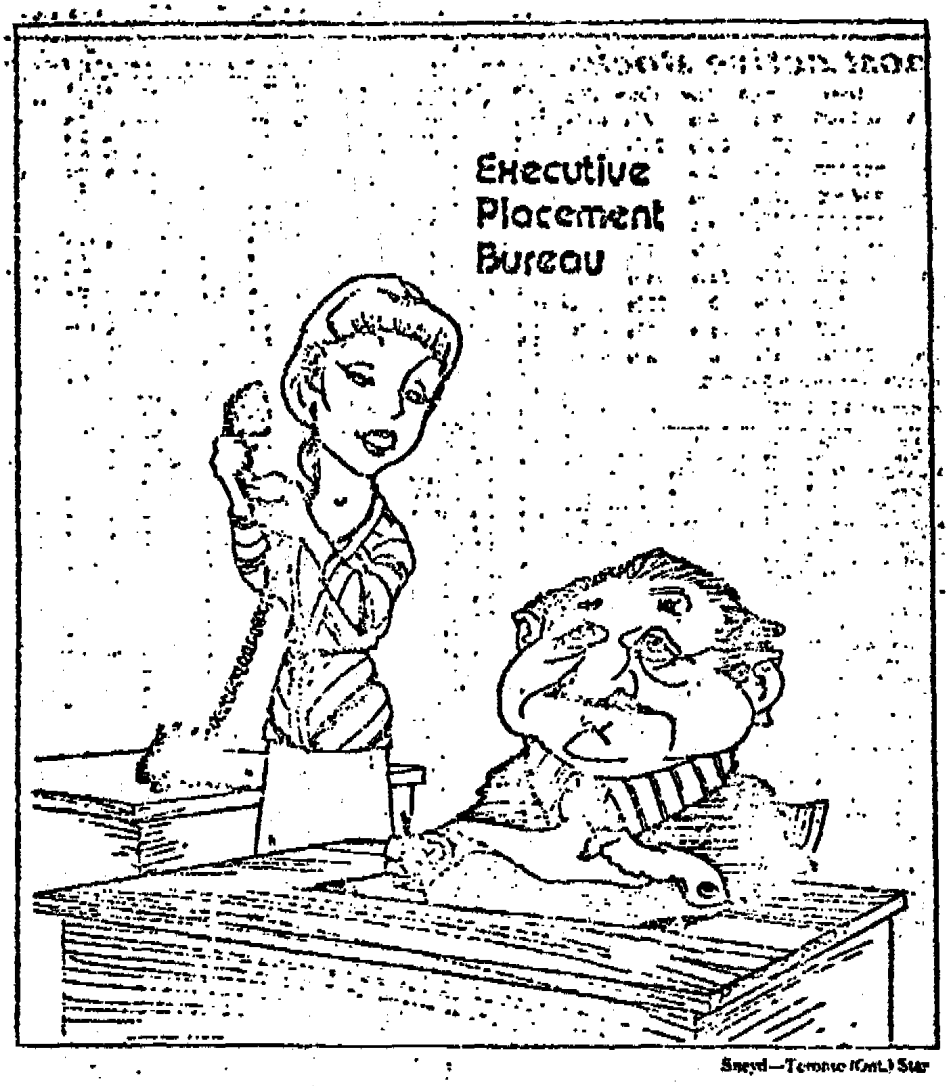

Sneyd—Toronto (Ont.) Star

"It's Henry Kissinger, again."